

# THE BOSTON INFORMER

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For people who care about Boston

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## Central Artery/Tunnel Project



Source: Central Artery/Tunnel Project

## Central Artery/Tunnel Factoids

The \$14.6 billion Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T) project is 92% complete and is expected to be substantially complete in December 2004. When complete, it will have a number of remarkable features.

- The new Central Artery will cater more to interstate traffic than local traffic with 13 fewer on- and off-ramps.
- The underground highway will have eight to ten lanes; the elevated highway had six lanes.
- The total length of roadway in the CA/T project—45 miles—is three times what exists today.
- Only 30% of the new roadways will be in tunnel, 27% will be surface roadways and 43% will be elevated, more than pre-Big Dig.
- Dirt excavated for the project could fill Gillette Stadium to the top 16 times.
- Early utility relocations involved 29 miles of gas, electric, telephone, sewer, water and other utilities.
- The Charles River's Zakim Bridge is the widest cable-stayed bridge in the world.
- The project will create more than 260 acres of parks and open space with over 900 street trees and 7,000 shrubs.

**Big Dig Barrels Along** - The Central Artery/Tunnel (CA/T) project is reaching the home stretch with 92 percent of the work complete. Funded in 1987, construction of the Ted Williams Tunnel and South Boston Haul Road began in 1991. Utility relocation began in 1992, a "taste of things to come" for the downtown.

- One of the first project elements to be completed was essential to keeping construction trucks from wreaking havoc in the neighborhoods. The 1.1-mile South Boston Haul Road, parallel to A Street, was finished in 1993.
- Boston's third automobile tunnel under the Boston Harbor, the Ted Williams Tunnel, opened on December 15, 1995, but only for trucks, buses and taxis. The original plan was to open the Ted Williams Tunnel and the connection to the MassPike for all vehicles by the mid-1990s to siphon off traffic from downtown streets. Didn't happen, and neither did horrendous traffic downtown.
- October 1999: The Storrow Drive Connector Bridge opens to provide connections between Leverett Circle and I-93 in Charlestown.
- January 2003: One of the most complicated and costly (\$6.5 billion) sections of the

Central Artery/Tunnel Project, the 3.5-mile MassPike connector, opened to extend the MassPike to South Boston, Logan Airport and Route 1A in East Boston via the Ted Williams Tunnel. The Ted Williams Tunnel was then opened to all traffic. A new

interchange in South Boston also debuted following the opening of the connector.

- March 2003: A 1.5-mile portion of the northbound Central Artery tunnel opened. From the new tunnel, drivers rise from underground and onto the Zakim Bridge.

## What's Left to Do?

### Major Central Artery milestones to come include:

- Open southbound artery tunnel and southbound Zakim Bridge: Dec. 2003–March 2004.
- Complete Charles River parks (North Point Park and Nashua Meadows Park): Mid-2004.
- I-90/Route 1A Interchange in East Boston with connections to new Logan Airport roadways: Mid-2005.
- Connect the ramps from surface to I-93 north at Zakim Bridge: Early 2005.
- Complete "residual ramps" from Storrow Dr. north and Leverett Cir. north: Mid-2005.
- Complete demolition of the elevated highway: Early 2005.
- Construct Charles River Basin pedestrian bridges: Mid- to late 2005.
- Construct surface roadways with cross streets, curbs, sidewalks, street furniture, trees, etc.: 2005.
- Complete the design and then build the planned parks in Chinatown, Wharf District (Cross to Oliver streets) and the North End: Late 2006.
- Select developers for ramp, North End, Bulfinch Triangle, downtown and South Bay parcels: ??

### Transit milestones to come:

- Blue Line Modernization—Maverick (late 2005) and Orient Heights (2006) will complete the Blue Line work. Airport station will open in early 2004.
- Begin service on the So. Boston Piers Transitway (Silver Line Phase II) from So. Station to World Trade Center: Late spring 2003; extend to Convention Center and Logan Airport by end 2004.
- North Station Superstation—Create a combined Orange and Green line station at North Station with underground walkways to commuter rail: Open spring 2004.



## People Movers

Kim Jones, from Boston Redevelopment Authority to Chan Krieger.  
Deborah Goddard, former director of real estate development at the Boston Housing Authority, to Urban Edge Housing Corporation.  
Dan McGonagle, from HNTB to Gannett Fleming, Phoenix office.  
Glenn Sadulsky, formerly at HNTB, is now at DMJM/Harris.  
Jack Bradshaw has returned to Gilbane Construction after a stint at Suffolk Construction.  
Doug Prentiss, from the BETA Group to Judith Nitsch Engineering.  
John Peterson resigned as executive director of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society.  
Clint Schuckel, from Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates to City of Newton traffic engineer.  
Robert Golledge, from VHB to commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection.  
Peter M. Zuk, former Big Dig head, has joined Gadsby Hannah.  
Ann Donner has completed her term as director of the Trust for City Hall Plaza.

**1 Dartmouth Street plaza**—The City of Boston and MassHighway continue to move forward with pedestrian improvements at Boylston Street, Dartmouth Street and St. James Avenue in Back Bay. Funded back in 1997, the \$1.7 million construction project to create the plaza in front of the Boston Public Library by closing the southbound roadway, eliminate pedestrian islands, and modify traffic signals began last year. MassHighway is overseeing the work of the contractor, Belli Company of Newton, as it races toward completion in 2004.

The relatively small construction project has been beset with delays caused by the process for selecting the color of the granite pavers; an 8- to 12-week delay in the delivery of the granite; unexpected infrastructure conditions; traffic controllers that are the same as Big Dig controllers, and the Big Dig has been delayed; the contractor was overextended; bad weather; pigeons; and a lunar eclipse.

If the Big Dig were built at this rate—about \$1 million of construction per year—it would take a millennium to reach the first \$1.5 billion in construction!

**2 Christopher Columbus Park** on the North End waterfront, completely redesigned and rebuilt, officially reopened on July 18, 2003, in a ceremony led by Mayor Menino. The new park is about four acres and has a bigger expanse of grass (about one-quarter acre more), lower profile with views of the harbor from Atlantic Avenue, larger tot-lot, maintenance building, restored statue of Christopher Columbus and a performance space which doubles as proactive fountains.

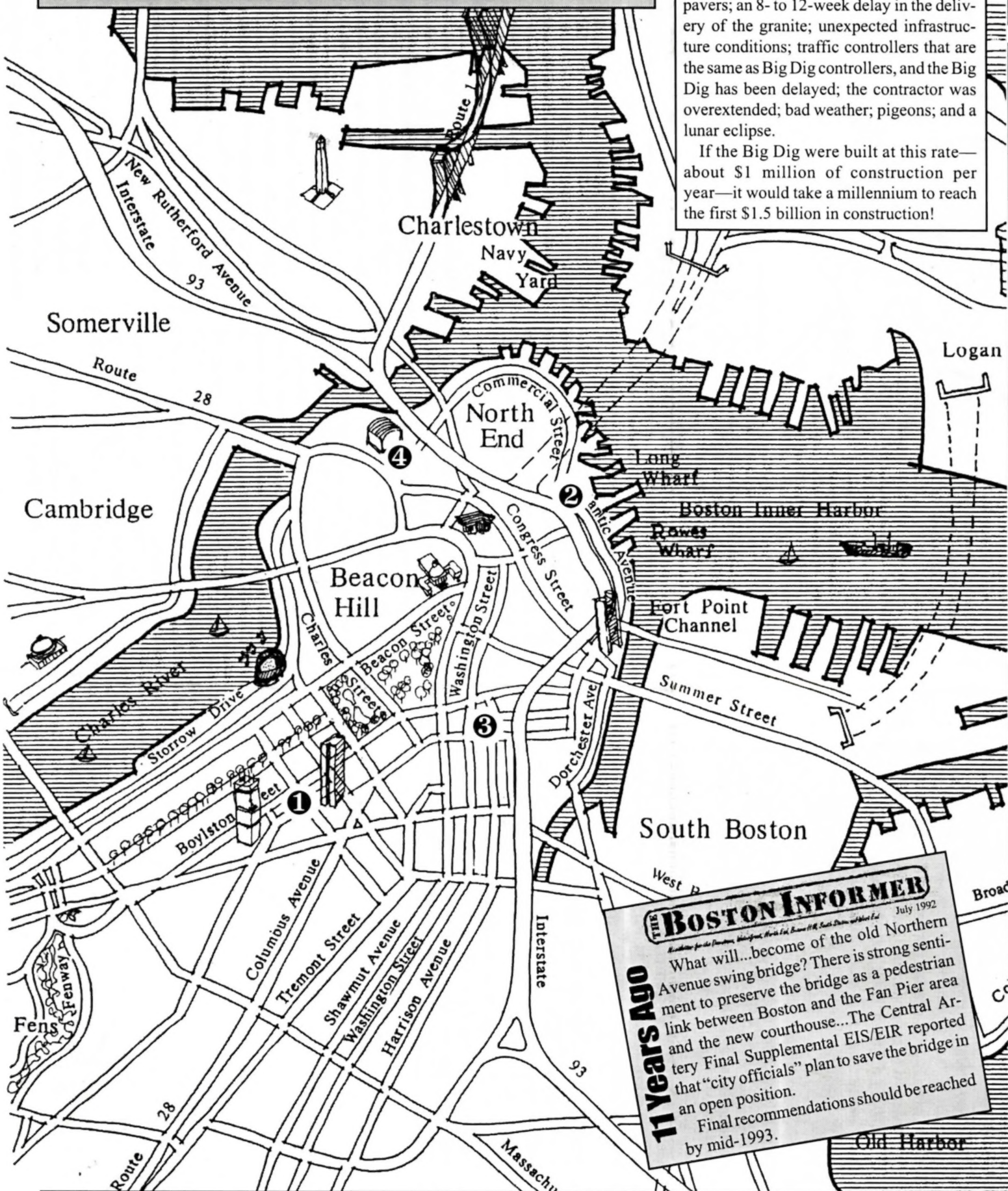
Christopher Columbus Park is an important part of the new surface artery Wharf District park system since it adjoins Parcel 14 and is about the same size as all four Wharf District parcels put together.

**3 Proposed Planned Development Area in Chinatown**—The proposed Residences at Kensington Place, 336 rental units in Chinatown, is seeking zoning relief by trying to establish a Planned Development Area (PDA) on one acre of land assembled by the proponent. Opponents noted the area being considered for the PDA overlay district includes sidewalks, public streets and land owned by others and cried foul.

The Boston Informer took interest after reading the BRA quoted in The Boston Globe, "It's not unusual for development projects...to include public land and land owned by someone else in the planned development district." Strong statement. Our adjunct research department found the examples offered by the BRA may have included public ways, but those streets were either not included in the one acre required for PDA or the alleys or streets were acquired by the developers and are no longer public.

It all seems straightforward: the Kensington project owns only approximately 21,000 s.f. yet claims it has the required one acre; has a development plan for only what it owns, not the full acre as required; includes public ways in the acreage calculation yet cannot build on them; and seeks zoning relief for buildings twice the allowable height. At issue for opponents is the precedent of granting smaller sites PDA status to throw out the existing zoning. And this is another example of how the BRA encounters conflicts due to its dual role as planning agency and redevelopment authority, independent from City Council budget scrutiny.

**4 Recycle the delegates' confetti!** A coalition of 40 environmental, transportation and civic organizations has formed the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Conventions (CERC) to promote sustainable conventions at both the Democratic and Republican Conventions. CERC will seek to get the Democratic and Republican national committees to provide everything from walking maps, transit information galore, recycling and to take other environmentally responsible actions.



**THE BOSTON INFORMER** July 1992

What will...become of the old Northern Avenue swing bridge? There is strong sentiment to preserve the bridge as a pedestrian link between Boston and the Fan Pier area and the new courthouse...The Central Artery Final Supplemental EIS/EIR reported that "city officials" plan to save the bridge in an open position.

Final recommendations should be reached by mid-1993.

## Northern Avenue Bridge Proposal

After sentencing the old Northern Avenue Bridge over the Fort Point Channel to death several times since 1996 following completion of the nearby Evelyn Moakley Bridge, the City of Boston is now actively trying to find federal funding to help bring it back to life. The City has decided the bridge is now needed in view of proposed major development on the South Boston waterfront and the existing rush-hour traffic gridlock on the bridges to South Boston.

The new scheme, espoused by Mayor Menino and Public Works Commissioner Casazza, involves fixing the bridge span and permanently raising it 8 feet-8 inches to give the center span a height of 16 feet above mean high

tide, the same as the Moakley Bridge. The floors of the two side spans would slope down to ground level (1 in 20) on each side, well within ADA



guidelines. The three 22-foot-wide lanes on the bridge would be used for pedestrians (north lane), a glass-enclosed art gallery and sculpture garden (center lane), and vehicles (south lane). The ve-

hicle lane would be one way, reversible for morning and evening rush hours.

The proposal includes a two-story section in the center of the art gallery with elevator access to view the obsolete swing mechanism under the bridge. A bridge museum on the rebuilt tender pier is also proposed. The estimated cost of the entire project is \$35 million, and the City is seeking federal, state, city and private funds. In the meantime, the City is planning to close the bridge, heavily used by pedestrians, for eight months for repairs starting in September.



## Welcome to The Boston Informer!

The goal is simple: provide concise public information on construction projects, planning initiatives, and whatever else affects living and working in Boston. Welcome to *The Boston Informer*!

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### Recycling will be a major part of the Democratic National Convention in 2004...



Political hot air put to practical use

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## You Were Asking

- Q. Has the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) been abolished as Governor Romney proposed?**
- A.** Not exactly. It has been merged with the Department of Environmental Management to form a new state agency, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The new DCR commissioner is Katherine Abbott, former president of the Island Alliance. The acting director of the Division of Urban Parks and Recreation, the reconstituted MDC, is William McKinney.
- Q. What has happened with the Government Center Task Force that was formed to propose new ideas for Government Center and City Hall Plaza?**
- A.** The Task Force finished its work and drafted a report which will not be made public until it is presented to Mayor Menino, probably in October. The City Hall Plaza Trust has also dissolved, perhaps because, as rumored, City Hall Plaza must remain the way it is until the Red Sox win the World Series.
- Q. Why is Mayor Menino proposing to risk taxpayer money on loans to hotel developers who can't get private financing because of the deep depression in the local hotel market?**
- A.** The Mayor apparently feels that the new South Boston Convention Center, which has very few bookings, badly needs help with more hotel rooms as soon as possible.
- Q. The \$8 toll on cars entering Central London on weekdays seems to be successful in reducing traffic congestion. Should we adopt a similar scheme in Boston?**
- A.** Politically it might not be possible. The EPA parking freeze in downtown Boston was supposed to reduce congestion and improve air quality.

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Boston Architectural Center



**TIME TO RENEW**

Susan Lewis Library Director 7/1/03  
Boston Architectural Center

320 Newbury St.

Boston, MA 02116

